the completion of the verification process. Tatkal passports are expected to be issued the same day. It is also proposed that the average time taken for submission of application by an applicant should not exceed 45 minutes. Police verification will be expedited through electronic linkage of the Passport Facilitation Centres with the police authorities in State Capitals.

As for security, in the Project, which has been elaborated in consultation with all concerned Government departments and agencies, only front-end and non-sensitive activities such as applications collection, data entry, acceptance of fee and capturing of photo etc., will be performed by the Service Provider selected through an open bidding process.

All sensitive aspects of passport issuance, including verification of documents, check-lists, the decision to grant a passport or otherwise and the handling of blank passport booklets will remain with Government employees as hitherto.

The new system under the Passport Seva Project will be introduced only after a comprehensive third party security audit by a Government agency. Such audit will thereafter be repeated every year. The data of passport holders will remain in the Government domain with strict access control. The ownership and strategic control of the core and critical assets of the project will remain with the Ministry of External Affairs. Data coming to the possession of the service provider, when the application is submitted, will only be used by him to feed the Government database and the service provider will be held strictly accountable for any misuse of data.

As for training of employees, the Project provides for training of all the employees of the Central Passport Organisation including IT skill enhancement and public dealing.

As for opening of more public dealing counters/passport outlets, the Project envisages setting up of 68 Passport Facilitation Centres all over the country and the number of public dealing counters countrywide will go up from about 345 at present to about 1250.

**Fishermen captured by Pakistani Agency**

2709. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the fishermen have been captured by Pakistani Security Agency in the last four years;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps Government is taking for the returning of the fishermen?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes.

(b) The number of Indian fishermen detained by Pakistan in the last four years is:

| | |
|---|---|
| 2004— | 852 |
| 2005— | 460 |
| 2006— | 365 |
| 2007— | 124 |

436 Indian fishermen are in the custody of the Government of Pakistan at present.

(c) The prolonged incarceration of our nationals in jails in Pakistan is a matter of grave concern to the Government of India. Government has consistently taken up the issue of Indians in custody in Pakistan with the Government of Pakistan, including at the highest level. During the visit of EAM to Pakistan on January 13-14, 2007, it was decided to form a Judicial Committee comprising judges from India and Pakistan to ensure expeditious release and humane treatment of prisoners in either country. The Committee first met on 26-27 February, 2008 in New Delhi. It recommended that a consolidated list with full particulars and their present status of nationals in each other's jails be exchanged on 31st March, 2008 and that prisoners who have completed their sentences and whose national status has been verified be released forthwith. The lists of prisoners have been exchanged by the two Governments on March, 31 and are under study. India expects the Government of Pakistan to implement the recommendations of the Judicial Committee to release and provide consular access to all detained fishermen and prisoners.

**Help to terrorist outfits**

2710. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has expressed its concerns to Pakistan over ISIs continuing help to terrorist outfits like Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba to launch attacks in India;

(b) if so, the response of Government of Pakistan in this regard;

(c) whether Government proposes to take up the matter seriously with the Government of Pakistan to check such help to terrorist outfits; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (d) India's concerns have been conveyed to the Government of Pakistan repeatedly including at its highest level. The issue of terrorism is discussed with Pakistan in the Composite Dialogue at the Foreign Secretaries talks, at the Home Secretary's talks within the Composite Dialogue, and in the Joint Anti-Terrorism Mechanism (JATM) set up in September, 2006. GoI expects the Government of Pakistan to implement its commitment at the highest level in the 6 January, 2004 Joint Press Statement that it will not permit any territory under Pakistan's control to be used to support terrorism in any manner.

**Stronger Military ties between India and China**

2711. SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and China decided to have a stronger military ties;

(b) if so, whether India has also urged China to settle the border issue between the two countries;

(c) whether recently, the Indian delegation visited China and has proposed resumption of the mechanism in border talks, so that two side could get back again to delineating their claims by trading maps so as to narrow down the differences; and

(d) if so, to what extent the Chinese have agreed and the latest position in regard to the border issue?